

Know your Rights

16 or 17 and homeless?

Am I homeless?

You don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be homeless. If you are staying somewhere you have no legal right to stay, (like a friends house), or somewhere it is not safe for you (where people are violent), then you are homeless.

Who can help?

Childrens Social Care must help most homeless 16 and 17 year olds. It is part of the County Council and used to be called Social Services.

In an emergency they can help find somewhere safe for you to stay the night.

District Council Housing Options

help people who are homeless. If it is an emergency, they can also help you to find somewhere safe to stay that night.

Independent Advice Services like Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau can help you understand your rights and challenge decisions you think are wrong.

What if Children's Social Care won't help me?

Get independent advice as soon as you can. Meanwhile go to the council and speak to someone from the Housing Options Team. Tell them you are homeless.

What help can I get from Children's Services?

Childrens Services will do an assessment to see if you are a 'child in need' (this legal term covers young people too). If they agree you are, they can help you to:

find a place to live - tackle personal issues

- get into education or training

What if I don't want help from Childrens Social Care?

Some young people don't like the idea of being involved with Children's Services. You don't have to agree to it, but they can help with all your issues — not just housing. If you don't want this help, you need to go to Housing Options

Will they tell me to go back home?

Whoever you go to will want to check if you can go back home, because it isn't easy living on your own at 16 and 17. Housing options and Children's Services have people who can talk to you and your parent(s) to see if you can sort things out

but you cannot be forced to go back home, especially if it isn't safe for you because of violence or abuse. That's why it is important for you to tell the worker about these things. Even if you and your parent(s) agree to talk, the council should still give you a place to stay while this is being sorted out.

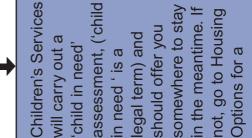
16 or 17, and have nowhere to stay tonight? You have two choices:



Go to Children's Services, there are offices in all the districts

Go to Housing
Options/Advice
team at your
local council

They will talk to your family to see if you can go back home, but cannot make you go if it is not safe. If you can't go back:



Children's Services

that you need a

'child in need' assessment,

you to stay and tell

Options/Advice will arrange a place for

Housing

don't want one (see

Top tip 3 at the

unless you say you

homeless and need back of this leaflet) urgent advice (see tell them you are Top tip 2 at the

back of this leaflet).

place to stay and

Sometimes this

assessment will be done by them together. you will be told if they After the assessment think you are a 'child in need' or not. If:

If you don't want an assessment Housing Options/ Advice decide if å

they are responsible

Children's Services

Yes

are now responsible education and trainsomewhere to live, ing (see Top tip 3) support with your paying for it and giving you other for finding you

If they make a deci-

sion you disagree

with, get advice

(see Top tip 2)

somewhere to live.

for finding you

up with somewhere safe to live. If this isn't Whichever route you take, you should end the case, get advice (see Top tip 2).

Top tip 1

We have a specialist housing advice team who will help homeless young people. Ask your Youth Support Service worker, or call into one of the drop in offices in your district.

Top tip 2

If you are confused or unhappy with what is happening, get advice from Shelter, a Citizens Advice Bureau or other agency or contact Shelter's helpline 0808 800 4444 (open daily from 8am, free to call from main UK mobile networks).

Top tip 3

Why have an assessment? If you are a 'child in need' under section 20 of the Children Act, Children's Services has a duty to help you find a place to live, pay for it, and help with education and training. In some cases, you have a right to this help until 21 or 24. These are important rights. Don't refuse an assessment without getting advice on what it really means for you.

Useful Contacts

District Councils Cheltenham Borough Council: Cotswold District Council: Forest of Dean District Council: Gloucester City Council: Stroud District Council: Tewkesbury Borough Council:	01242 775168 01285 623300 01594 810000 01452 396567 01453 754078 01684 272212
Children's Services Central Referral Hub: Youth Housing Advice Service Duty Desk:	01452 426565 01452 551276
Other useful contacts ASTRA, Alternative solutions to running away Childline free phone line Shelter National free phone housing advice help line	0800 3894992 0800 1111 0808 800 4444



A partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and District Councils.